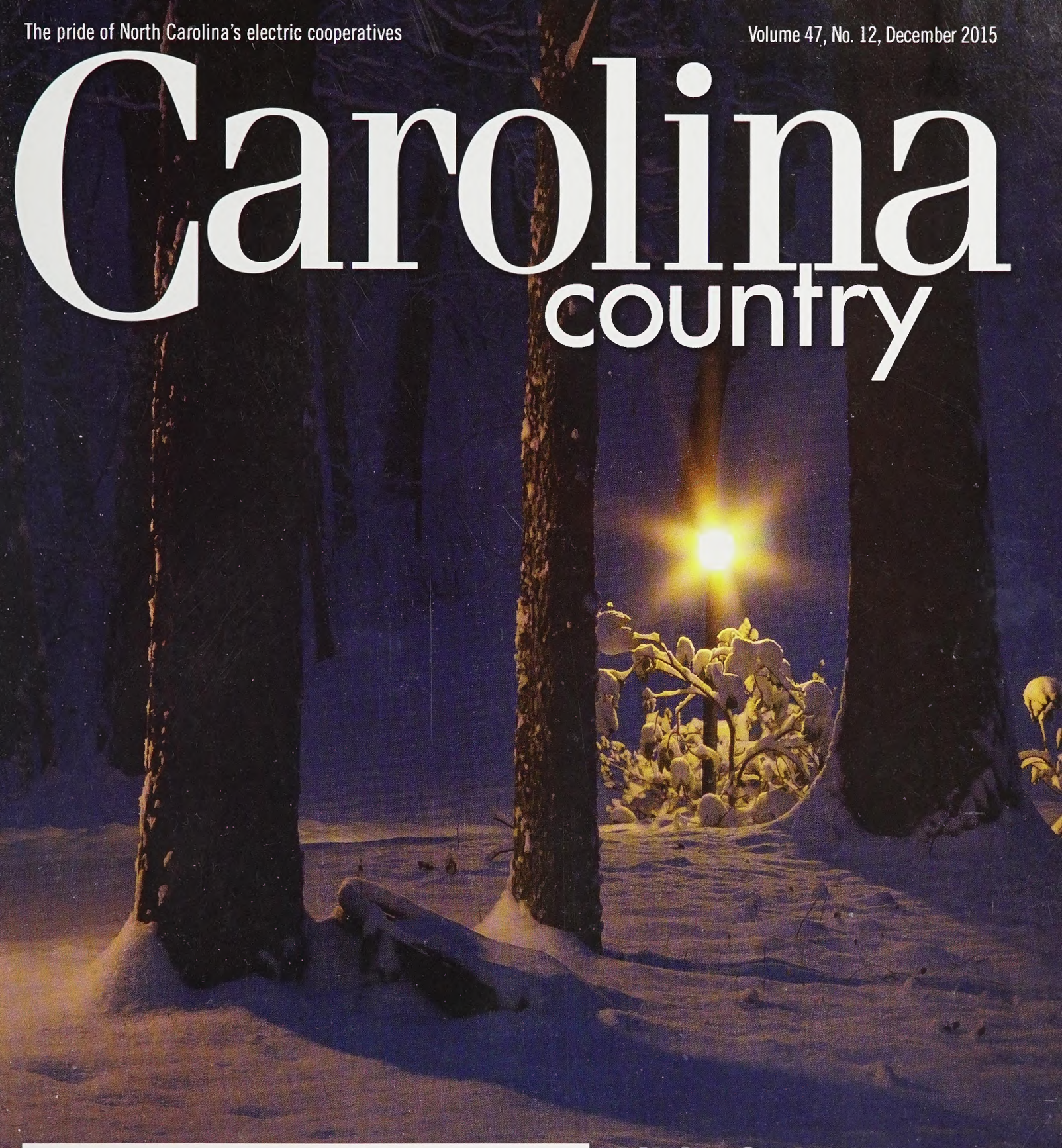
The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 47, No. 12, December 2015

Carolina country



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All Is Calm, All Is Bright

INSIDE:

Utilities & cleaner air

Christmas Day makeover

Winter Lights at the North Carolina Arboretum — page 26

This Necklace is NOT for Sale...

*It's yours for FREE**

*No kidding. Only Stauer can give you 200 carats of genuine amethyst for **NOTHING**.*

FREE Amethyst Necklace
Limited to the first 2500 responders to this ad only!

"This necklace is beautiful. I could not believe my eyes...GREAT!"
—Bonnie Longs, S. C.

You may think you understood the concept of "priceless" jewelry. For years, "priceless" meant "astronomically expensive." Owning "priceless" treasures was a rare privilege reserved for celebrities, billionaires, and royalty. The best most of us could do was dream. Until now...

Stauer smashes the luxury status quo with the release of our **FREE*** 200-Carat ***Lusso Amethyst Necklace***. That's right, we said **FREE**... as in "priceless." No charge.* ZERO dollars.* Call now and we'll send you this impressive helping of genuine amethyst (independently appraised at $295) for **FREE**. We cut the price 100% and you pay only $24.95, our regular charge for shipping, processing and insurance...we'll even ***pay you back with a $25 Discount Certificate—that's Better Than Free shipping!*** There are no tricks or gimmicks. You aren't obligated to spend another dime or dollar with us... although we make it VERY hard to resist.

Why give away jewelry? We want your attention. Once you get a closer look at our rare gemstone treasures and vintage-inspired watches, and once you discover the guilt-free fun of getting luxury for less, we're betting that you'll fall in love with Stauer. If not? Keep your **FREE** ***Lusso Amethyst Necklace*** anyway. No hard feelings.

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Stauer. A Different Tale to Tell.

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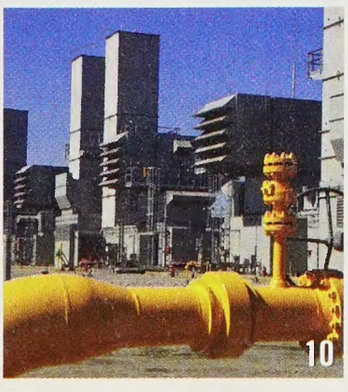
ON THE COVER

"Thanks to nature and our electric cooperative, all is calm and all is bright." Photography by Blue Ridge Mountain EMC member Judy Grove of Brasstown. Get prints of "Winter Morning" at naturephotosbyjudy.com



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Your cooperative sends you Carolina Country as a convenient, economical way to share with its members information about services, director elections, meetings and management decisions. The magazine also carries legal notices that otherwise would be published in other media at greater cost.

Your co-op's board of directors authorizes a subscription to Carolina Country on behalf of the membership at a cost of less than $5 per year.

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The electric utility of the future

By R.G. "Randy" Brecheisen

The electric power industry is often compared to the telecommunications industry, which faced huge challenges as political circumstances and new technologies, like the Internet and cellular devices, changed the landscape of its business. The telecom industry had to adapt to do the job that consumers expected. Electric utilities are doing the same thing. We are becoming the utility of the future.

Because technology improves and changes quickly, it can be hard to predict the exact operations of your cooperative 10 to 20 years down the road. But since their inception, electric utilities have by nature and by necessity made plans for working well into the future. We monitor developments in our industry, and we stay on top of trends that could become game-changers. As we did a generation ago, and in the generation before that, electric utilities continually adjust, adapt and plan to be the utility of the future.

> We are not simply preparing to do these jobs in the future, we have already made them part of how we do business every day.

Today we see a steady rise in the renewable energy sources that supply North Carolina's electric cooperatives. Solar, wind and biomass are increasingly part of our diverse power portfolio, and we believe that we will see continuing growth in this sector. Solar power and energy storage by batteries are front-runners in member-generated energy. This type of "distributed" generation, located on the utility distribution system itself, is very different from historical electric utility models where electricity flows in one direction from one source.

Not only are we seeing change in how electricity is generated, we're also seeing change in how electricity is distributed and used. A "grid" can now serve a specific geographic area or a campus of industrial and commercial facilities. Electric power can be made in the same place where it is used. Consumers are more aware of their own usage and how they can manage it.

As we all become more interconnected with smartphones and online applications, it is more important than ever for electric cooperatives to offer resources that allow members to invest in systems that control their energy consumption from a variety of devices. As the power grid becomes more interconnected, it is also very important to secure our network from hackers and others with malicious intent. We are not simply preparing to do these jobs in the future, we have already made them part of how we do business every day.

Americans will rely even more on electricity as time goes on. As we make greater use of information technology and as we see more electric vehicles on our roadways, a stable and reliable electric grid is more essential to our members than ever before.

Electric cooperatives always have been committed to growing and adapting. Because we are locally-owned by our members and have always cooperated with other cooperatives, we maintain a remarkable flexibility to adapt and change. Our principles of democratic control and commitment to our communities have guided us all these years to provide safe, reliable and affordable power, no matter what changes we have faced. Rest assured: cooperatives will remain your utility of the future.

Randy Brecheisen is president and CEO of Piedmont Electric Membership Corporation, the Touchstone Energy cooperative serving more than 31,000 member accounts in Caswell, Orange, Person and parts of Alamance, Durham and Granville counties.

Hooray for Carolina Country

I just had to write and tell you how wonderful your September issue was. I always look forward to Carolina Country, but September's issue provided so many exceptional articles. Without slighting those not mentioned, I want to comment especially on "Jacob's Log" (which I always enjoy), the article on the Greene Early College and Aiven Aguilar's personal story, and the amazing article on Jimmy Courson in "Model Man." All were poignant and moving stories. I am not a fulltime resident of Brunswick County (yet), but each time I read your magazine I am touched by so many of the issues and people you cover that it makes me realize how much I look forward to my time there.

Julia McClure, Brielle, N.J., and Sunset Beach, N.C., Brunswick EMC

See what Ms. McClure refers to at carolinacountry.com

Hooray for wind energy

Unlike David Beerbower ["Viewpoint," November 2015], I heartily applaud whoever has seen fit to contract with Iberdrola Renewables to construct a wind energy farm in northeastern North Carolina ["More Power to You," September 2015]. I don't care if tax rebates and credits are brought to bear, and I am a property owner and taxpayer.

It is no longer true that coal-fired power plants can produce electricity at a fraction of the cost of wind. Not according to my reading. It is as plain as day that Mr. Beerbower and others are happily but ignorantly repeating deliberate lies quite possibly planted by the coal industry. You do not want to be on the same side of history as these people.

Fossil-fuel executive Charles Koch thinks that subsidies for renewable energy production are no longer necessary. He seems to think wind and solar are in fact competitive with fossil fuels.

If, like me and Wallace Stevens, to you "the most beautiful thing on Earth is, of course, the Earth itself"—and if you believe current generations of human beings should do everything in their power to pass down to future generations a livable planet—please do all you can to wean North Carolina off fossil fuels as soon as it is humanly possible.

Wally Emerson, Scaly Mountain Haywood EMC

Backyard mechanics

Grandparents Avery and Kathy Branch love their resourceful grandchildren: Charlie (13), Jesse (11), Cody (4), Chandler (10) and Ava Reese (7). The proud parents are David and Candi Branch, and Granville and Summer Branch. And we're all from Elkin.

Candace Branch, Elkin, Surry-Yadkin EMC

Carolina country boy

Our son, Thomas Wade Graham, is a 4-year-old boy who spends a lot of his time playing around both of his grandparents' farms. The farm nearest to his house is the Talton Farm, a hay farm with some produce. His Papa's farm is all produce, mostly sweet corn and peas. Both are in the Pikeville-Princeton area. He loves when he is able to ride tractors or golf carts to help with whatever task is at hand. He and his sister Paislee also love spending time with cousins at the community pool. He is in the Pre-K program at the Princeton Church of God.

Wade and Malissa Graham, Princeton Tri-County EMC

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RJ's Hot Dog Dayz

By Rhonda Johnson

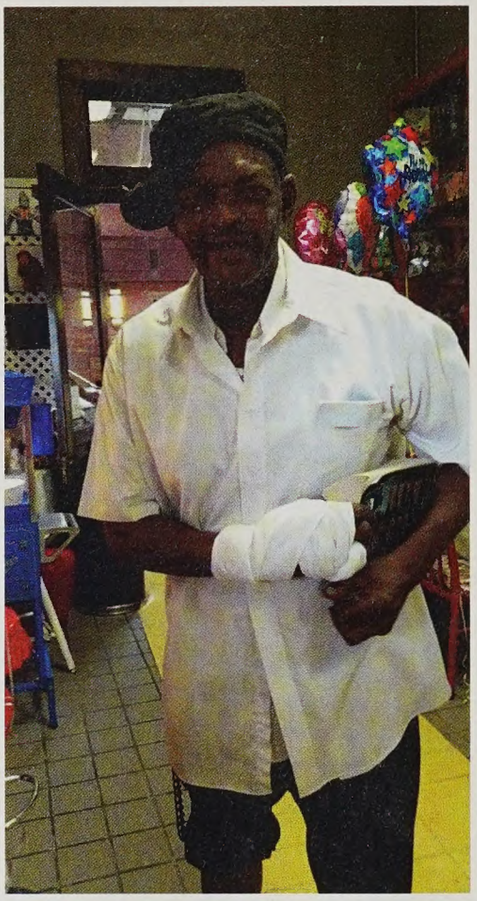
Life led me to North Carolina in 1999 after my 17-year-old son was killed in Baltimore. Country life saved my sanity. My grandmother was from here and would bring me here often as a child. I always loved this country.

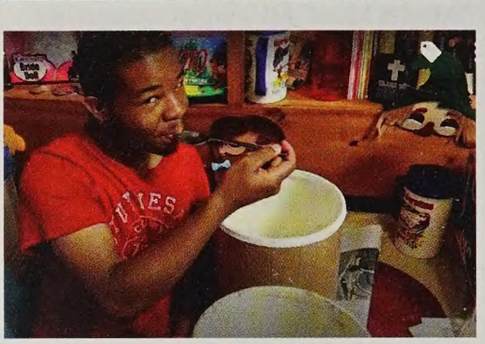
I had been an employment counselor since 1983, helping any and every one that needed my help. I left my job three years ago and opened the sweetest café, RJ's Hot Dog Dayz, in the Rocky Mount Amtrak Station. I befriended the homeless, hungry and unemployed. Some of them had lost hope and slept or sat, day in and day out, at the station. There was never a day that I left anyone hungry. I assisted them with finding jobs, or with disability benefits and places to stay, providing carfare, work boots, resumes. I fed and counseled the teens who hung out in the station, just trying to keep them out of trouble and in school. They got their hair cut for helping me out in the café. (A picture shows them helping me at Christmas.) My train station kids helped to fill the hole left in my heart from losing my son.

One day a woman who worked in the train station told me she overheard a lady say, "She'll never make it, because she gives away too much." Perhaps she was right, because I didn't earn enough to pay the bills and had to leave the Amtrak station. My train kids were so sad, as well as the people I fed and looked out for, such as my senior citizens who hung out there and told their tall tales.

I have been checking on some places, and if God blesses me I can continue to give the homeless, helpless and underprivileged food, jobs and help in any capacity I can. RJ's may be gone from the Amtrak station, but it will never be forgotten. And by the grace of God, I will return to do bigger and better things to help people.

See a video on carolinacountry.com of when RJ's Hot Dog Dayz was in operation.





In the Rocky Mount train station, I tried to help anyone who needed it, whatever their place in life.

Rhonda Johnson lives in Rocky Mount and is a member of Edgecombe-Martin County EMC.

Send Your Story

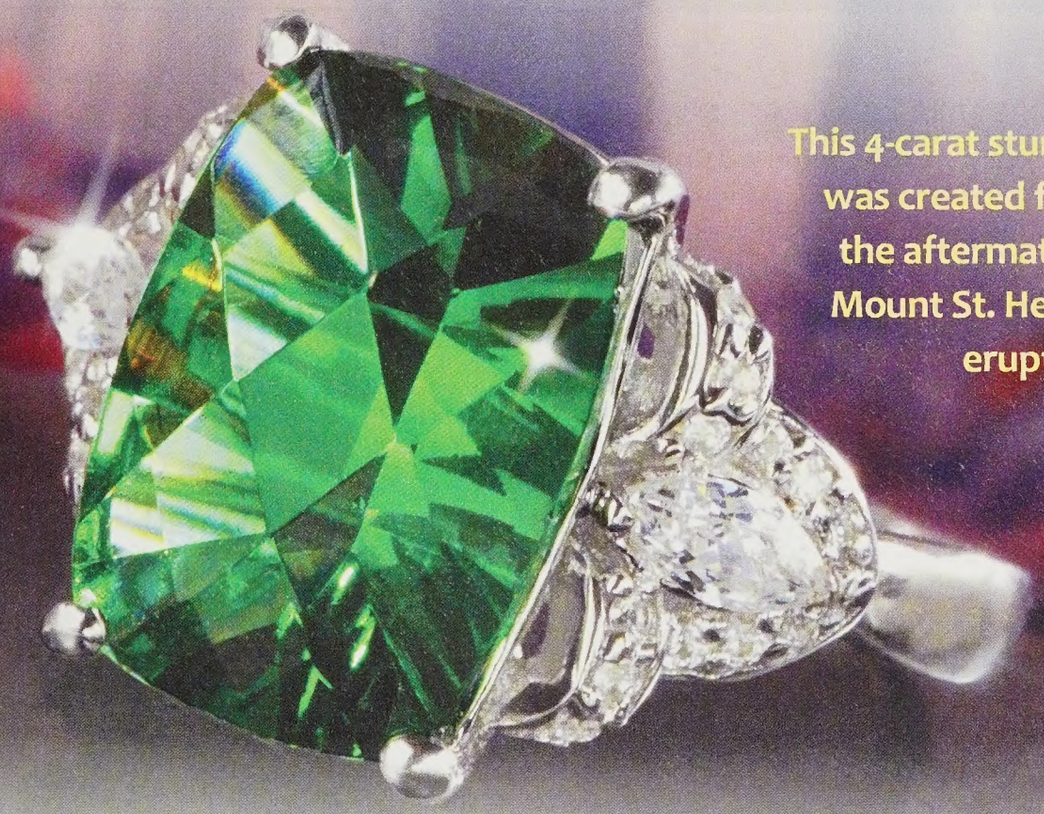
If you have a story for "Where Life Takes Us," about an inspiring person who is helping others today, or about your own journey, send it to us with pictures.

- We will pay $100 for those we can publish.
- Send about 400 words.
- Pictures must be high resolution or good quality prints.
- Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you want anything returned.
- We retain reprint rights.
- Tell us your name, mailing address, and the name of your electric cooperative.
- To submit: email to editor@carolinacountry.com ("Inspiration" in the subject line) or online at carolinacountry.com/contact

What our clients are saying about Stauer Helenite jewelry:

"My wife received more compliments on this stone on the first day she wore it than any other piece of jewelry I've ever given her."

– J. from Orlando, FL
Stauer Client



This 4-carat stunner was created from the aftermath of Mount St. Helens eruption!

Famous Volcano Has Strange Effect On Women

Man and nature collaborate to create a glamorous green ring guaranteed to rock her world! Own it today for ONLY $99 plus FREE studs with ring purchase!

On May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted, sending a column of ash and smoke 80,000 feet into the atmosphere. From that chaos, something beautiful emerged—our spectacular **Spirit Lake Helenite Ring.**

Created from the superheated volcanic rock dust of the historic Mount St. Helens eruption, helenite has become the green stone of choice for jewelry and fashion designers worldwide. Helenite's vivid color and immaculate clarity rivals mined emeralds that can sell for as much as $3,000 per carat. Today you can wear this 4-carat stunner for **only $99!**

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-a $129 value-
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Our exclusive design highlights the visually stunning stone with a concave cut set in .925 sterling silver loaded with brilliant white, lab-created Diamond*Aura*®. The classic pairing of colors in a vintage-inspired setting makes for a statement ring that's simply impossible to ignore!

Beauty from the beast. Also known as "America's Emerald," helenite is not an emerald at all, but a brighter and clearer green stone that gem cutters can facet into spectacular large carat weight jewelry. "It's just recently that luxury jewelers have fallen in love with helenite," says James Fent, GIA certified gemologist. "Clear green color in a stone this size is rarely found in emeralds but helenite has come to the rescue."

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Bring home the Spirit Lake Helenite Ring and see for yourself. If you are not completely blown away by the exceptional beauty of this rare American stone, simply return the ring within 60 days for a full refund of your purchase price. It's that simple. But we're betting that once you slide this gorgeous green beauty on your finger, it will take a force of nature to get you two apart!

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4 carat Helenite center stone • Lab-created white DiamondAura accents • .925 sterling silver setting • Whole ring sizes 5–10

Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices™

Carbon emissions progress in the electric utility industry

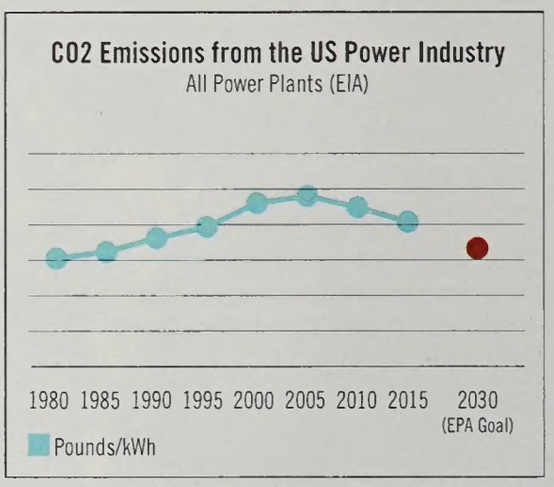
The Obama Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency last August issued its Clean Power Plan rules to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the nation's electric power generation plants. In October, a number of parties filed legal action that will subject the plan to litigation in court.

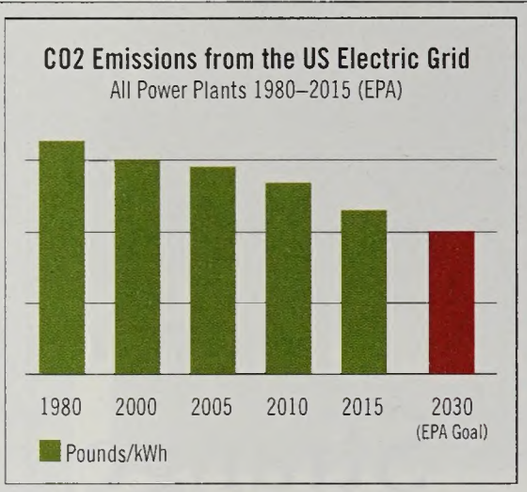
If upheld, the Clean Power Plan will affect carbon dioxide emissions from existing coal-fired and combined-cycle natural gas-burning power plants. The target is to reduce emissions nationally from the 2005 level by 32 percent by the year 2030. Each state is given a specific goal and tasked with developing a plan to meet that goal.

While North Carolina's electric cooperatives have concerns about how the plan will affect co-op members, electric cooperatives are working with state officials to develop a plan to meet the state goal of a 36 percent reduction by 2030 and minimize any resulting cost increases that could affect cooperative members. States must submit plans to the EPA by September 2016.

North Carolina's electric cooperatives have always valued a diverse power portfolio that includes nuclear, natural gas and renewables. In fact, more than half of the power provided by North Carolina's electric cooperatives comes from emissions-free nuclear energy. Also, cooperatives offer their members a variety of energy efficiency programs to help co-op members better manage their energy use.

The electric utility industry in general has been actively reducing power plant emissions for years. At right are some charts that help illustrate the picture.


CO2 Emissions from the US Power Industry
All Power Plants (EIA)
1980 1985 1990 1995 2000 2005 2010 2015 2030
(EPA Goal)
Pounds/kWh



Low-income households can get help for winter heating costs

The federal government in October made available more than $3 billion to help low-income citizens pay heating bills this winter. The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) provides for a one-time vendor payment to help eligible households pay their heating bills. For the period Dec. 1–31, only households containing an elderly person age 60 and above or a disabled person receiving services through the N.C. Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) are eligible for benefits.

Any household can potentially receive benefits from Jan. 1–March 31 or until funds are exhausted. A household that applies must:

- Have at least one U.S. citizen or non-citizen who meets the eligibility criteria.
- Meet an income test.
- Have reserves at or below $2,250.
- Be responsible for its heating bills.

Applications will be taken Dec. 1–Jan. 31 or until funds are exhausted. Contact your county Department of Social Services for the application dates and for additional information on LIEAP. You can find your local department and other energy assistance information at the state website: ncdhhs.gov (search for LIEAP).

Co-ops keep poles in good condition

Poles are the backbone of your cooperative's power distribution network. Strong, sturdy utility poles ensure a reliable electric system, which is why co-ops routinely inspect the poles on their lines. Throughout the year, crews check poles for decay caused by exposure to the elements. They know which poles are oldest and conduct inspections through a rotational process. Typically, a standard wooden distribution pole is expected to last more than 50 years.

Occasionally, poles need to be replaced for reasons other than decay and old age. Weather disasters, power line relocation and vehicle crashes are causes for immediate replacement. When possible, cooperatives communicate when and where pole replacements will take place.

See a video on how electric cooperatives change poles at carolinacountry.com.

Try This!

Remote control

'Smart home' energy networks are evolving

By Brian Sloboda, Peter May-Ostendorp and Laura Moorefield

If your house is equipped with high-speed, broadband Internet service, you can expand beyond "traditional" networked devices like computers and smartphones to include smart appliances, streaming media players, smart thermostats and other devices that can communicate with each other and the Internet.

These growing home networks — often referred to as smart homes, connected homes or referenced as the "Internet of Things" by technology media — can be used for a variety of applications, including security, lighting, health, entertainment and energy management.

At their most basic, home energy networks provide information on energy use and control over connected devices. Forget to turn off the lights or turn down the thermostat before going on vacation? Need to see how much money your home is spending to run laundry equipment? With home energy networks, there's an app for that.

Advanced home energy networks can analyze use trends, suggest behavior changes, automate and optimize the setup of certain devices and frequently provide mobile apps to centralize settings and controls.

An example is a thermostat that users train to recognize their temperature preferences and away-from-home schedules. The more complicated the network and the greater number of connected devices, the deeper the potential energy savings and the more sophisticated these "orchestrations" can become.

In the most advanced systems, homeowners can create scenarios that effectively provide a "sleep" or "standby" mode for the entire house.

Of course, home energy networks require a lot more than a smartphone and software wizardry. There can be significant hardware investments, and many times products from one vendor can't control products from another. Getting everything to work seamlessly from one app is the goal, but often you have to use multiple apps from multiple vendors for products to work.

We are still in the early stages of the smart home revolution, but there's no denying it: advancements are taking place every day, and more and more people are discovering the convenience of controlling things remotely.

Laura Moorefield founded Moorefield Research & Consulting, LLC, lives in Durango, Colo., and is a member of La Plata Electric Association. Peter May-Ostendorp founded Xergy Consulting and has been investigating emerging energy savings opportunities in buildings since 2004. Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

For more information on how to save energy, including a virtual house tour, go to TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

NATURAL GAS IS PASSING COAL AS THE LEADING ELECTRICITY FUEL

Energy made history in April when more electricity in the U.S. was generated with natural gas than with coal.

Natural gas fueled 32 percent of the electricity, coal fueled 30 percent. In one way, that was a fluke, since electricity use typically declines in the spring and fall, allowing scheduled maintenance at coal plants. Sure enough, by May coal was back in first place at 33 percent compared with 31 percent for natural gas.

Then, again in July and August, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reported that natural gas fueled more electricity generation than coal. Recent trends will soon make the natural gas ranking the new normal.

As recently as 2005, coal sat way on top, generating more than half of all the electricity in the U.S. Natural gas provided just 19 percent.

There's no single reason for this reversal. For one, utilities have retired their coal generating capacity at the rate of more than 3 percent a year since 2012. EIA estimates that the pace of coal plant closures to continue through 2020. And there is concern about coal's effect on the environment and the resulting government regulation.

The natural gas drilling boom of the past seven years is also producing plentiful supplies at relatively low costs. A key reason for this trend is that natural gas generation technology is cheaper and easier to build than coal plants.

It all adds up to continued declines in coal as an electricity fuel, says Mike Casper, senior manager of generation and fuels for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. He says, "There are no electric co-ops that I'm aware of that are looking at coal to build new capacity over the next 10 years."

This shift to natural gas, however, brings its own challenges, says Casper. Among those challenges:

- Natural gas will continue to face added emission regulations.
- The Interstate Natural Gas Association of America estimates 850 miles a year of new gas transmission pipeline could be needed between now and 2035 in order to transport new production to demand.
- More effort and cost will go into coordinating operations with the increased use of intermittent resources such as solar and wind power.
- New transmission lines will be required to carry electricity from new resources—including new natural gas generation and new solar and wind farms—to where people live.
- The just-in-time pipeline delivery and daily pricing of natural gas creates more volatility in fuel prices compared to the 30-day (or more) inventory that coal plants maintain in their coal piles.

—Paul Wesslund, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

> "To meet growing demand for electricity and reduce carbon emissions, North Carolina's electric cooperatives plan to rely more on natural gas as a generating fuel and less on coal."

Natural gas and your cooperative

To meet growing demand for electricity and reduce carbon emissions, North Carolina's electric cooperatives plan to rely more on natural gas as a generating fuel and less on coal. As the North American supply of natural gas grows and its pricing stabilizes, applying it to electricity generation is also good for the cooperatives' financial condition.

The fuels used now to generate your cooperative's electricity represent a diverse mix. While the exact amounts vary, about 56 percent comes from emissions-free nuclear plants, 19 percent from natural gas, 14 percent from coal, 8 percent from purchase agreements and 3 percent from renewable energy. Wholesale purchase agreements with generating utilities such as Duke Energy account for most of the coal and natural gas in the mix.

Also, 25 of the state's electric cooperatives own 61.5 percent of Catawba Nuclear Station Unit 1, and a 30.76 percent interest in the common facilities of the nuclear station in York County, S.C. They also own four generating plants that produce power at times of peak demand and for emergency back-up power. A pair of 330-megawatt peak power plants—one in Anson County and another in Richmond County—run primarily on natural gas. On the Outer Banks, a 15-MW plant in Buxton and a 3-MW plant on Ocracoke run on diesel fuel and serve as emergency and back-up generators.

As electric utilities in the region retire coal-burning plants and turn to cleaner natural gas and renewable energy, they will need infrastructure to handle the transition. Four major utilities, organized as Atlantic Coast Pipeline, recently applied for permits to build a 564-mile pipeline to transport natural gas from Harrison County, W. Va., southeast through Virginia (with an extension to Chesapeake), and south through central North Carolina to Robeson County. The governors of all three states have pledged their support. Pending regulatory approval, construction could begin in the second half of 2016 and the pipeline could be in service in late 2018. The four utilities are Dominion, Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas (to be acquired by Duke Energy) and AGL Resources.

THE RISE OF NATURAL GAS FOR ELECTRICITY GENERATION

Over the last 15 years coal has been losing its dominance to natural gas as a fuel for generating electricity. Reasons for the trend include lower building and operating costs for natural gas, and environmental rules on coal plants. Here is the history that led to that trend.

Sources: EIA and industry reports

1960s

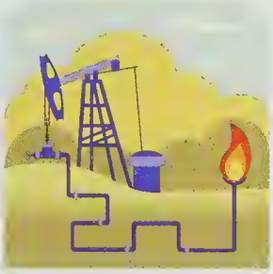
Blackouts in England and New York City create interest in using natural gas turbines as backup generators. Combined-cycle technology makes natural gas turbines more efficient.

1970

Major amendments to the federal Clean Air Act pave the way for environmental controls, raising the cost and complexity of coal-fired power plants.

1980s

Several steps taken to deregulate natural gas. Fuel Use Act of 1978 restricting natural gas repealed in 1987. Natural gas price drops by more than half from 1983–1994.



1985

Coal generates 57 percent of the power in the U.S.

1990

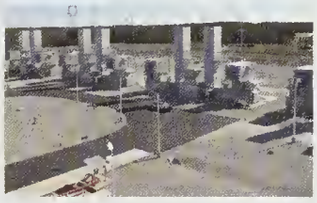
Clean Air Act Amendments add additional rules for coal power plants.

1990s

Several steps taken at the federal and state level to loosen regulations on electric utility markets. Non-traditional power producers begin building generation capacity, almost all of it burning natural gas.

2000-2002

Electric generation capacity increases nearly 20 percent, almost all of it from new natural gas turbines.



2005-2014

New natural gas drilling technology, including "fracking," increases U.S. natural gas production more than 40 percent in 10 years.

APRIL 2015

For the first time, natural gas generates more electricity than coal. Coal regains its top share in May.

AUGUST 2015

The EPA announces its Clean Power Plan calling for natural gas to produce 33 percent of the nation's electricity by 2030, and coal 27 percent.

The Portsmouth Life-saving Station

By Jack Dudley

Established by the N.C. General Assembly in 1753, the town of Portsmouth at Ocracoke Inlet was a key point of entry to the state for ocean-going shipping. After hurricanes altered the inlet and the Civil War took its toll, the community of more than 600 residents began leaving. Today the area is preserved by the National Park Service.

The Station

...The Portsmouth Station [first occupied in 1894] was patterned after the Quanochontaug-type Brant Rock Station in Massachusetts. Shingles entirely covered the building. The so-called "Shingle-style" stations constructed during this era were well suited to the harsh weather of the Outer Banks.

Below the tower on the first floor is the boat room, where doors and ramps on the east and west sides provide easy access to boats and rescue equipment. From the east side, boats could be launched directly into the water. Boats on a beach wagon and rescue gear could exit the west side also.

The keeper's quarters and crew gathering room are on the ground level. Initially, the station had an indoor kitchen (galley) in the gathering room. The second floor provided sleeping and storage facilities for eight surfmen. A second smaller sleeping compartment was for shipwreck victims. The attic was used for storage.

The Surfboat (about 1905)

The Monomoy surfboat, named after the Massachusetts island of the same name, was similar to the double-ended whaling boat. It could be rowed or sailed. The boats varied in design, but most were lapstrake or "clinker-built" hulls, normally built of juniper with white oak frames. They were typically 23 to 27 feet in length, 6½ to 7 feet in width, weighed 700 to 1,100 pounds and had a relatively shallow draft. The keeper steered while six to eight surfmen rowed. A surfboat could carry 10 to 12 people, as well as the crew. By 1910, The Life-Saving Service was converting to powered surfboats and lifeboats. In 1912, Portsmouth acquired its first powered boat.

...Note the heavy long oars and brass oarlocks. Around the gunwales (tops of the sides) is a padded bumper. This was to minimize impact when alongside a distressed vessel in rough seas. Also, note the sagging ropes hanging over the sides. These were lifelines for seamen being rescued to grasp, as well as for the life-savers, if the boat capsized.

The book

Excerpted with permission from "Southern Outer Banks — Cape Lookout Seashore," published 2015 by Jack Dudley, Coastal Heritage Series, Morehead City. Hardcover, 9-by-12 inches, 312 pages, more than 280 photographs. $45 plus tax and shipping from History Place Museum Store in Morehead City (thehistoryplace.org), Dee Gees Gifts & Books in Morehead City (deegees.com) and N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort (252-728-7317).

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Season's Eatings

North Carolina specialty foods for the holidays

By Leah Chester-Davis

North Carolina's artisan food purveyors offer a wide range of culinary options that make great gifts in this season of eating. Several of these food entrepreneurs got their start with recipes everyone raves about, with friends and family convincing them to bottle or package their creations. Their products fall within the specialty foods category, one of the fastest growing niche markets in the country. We serve up a list of some favorites for this year's gift-giving. Many more ideas and options from North Carolina companies can be found at gottobenc.com.

The Queen of Oats, a Cornelius-based business, sells granola, breakfast cookies and power bars at the Davidson Farmers Market, Whole Foods in the Charlotte area and online (queenofoats.com). Made with no refined sugar, the granola and breakfast cookies are chock full of healthy ingredients like oats, Montmorency cherries, seeds and nuts. Pair Queen of Oats items with your favorite yogurt and some fruit and you have the fixings for a guilt-free breakfast that is delicious. The Queen of Oats was a Martha Stewart American Made finalist last year.

A pancake breakfast gets a nudge toward divine with **Fogwood Foods** Butter Pecan syrup. Fogwood Foods, based in Rockingham County, also makes jams and jellies with local produce. Put together a gift box of Fogwood Food's Apple Pie Jam or Organic Blackberry Jelly, along with their syrup and gluten-free pancake mix from **Kalo Foods** in Stokesdale and you have the fixings for a down-home good breakfast. Visit fogwoodfood.com and kalofoods.com.

An appetizer or condiments basket makes a fun gift for those who like to entertain. Southerners love their chow-chows and relishes. **Cottage Lane Kitchen** of Chapel Hill is basking in recent accolades that come with being recognized as a 2015 Martha Stewart American Made Finalist for its fiery Southern Pepper Relish. Its "Get Me a Switch" won first in the Hot Relish category at the 2015 Chile Pepper Awards in Houston (cottagelanekitchen.com). Add **Ginny O's** Cheese Straws, a Raleigh company, to the basket for another quintessential Southern snack (ginnyo.com).

Cheese is a welcome addition to appetizer baskets or paired with a cheese board and a bottle or two of North Carolina wine. **Boxcarr Handmade Cheese**, based in Orange County's Cedar Grove, handcrafts goat's and cow's milk cheeses. The company, headed by a brother-sister team, has received 2015 Martha Stewart American Made Finalist status. Add a wedge of their cheese to an appetizer gift, or order each of their five flavors for a wine and cheese-tasting fan. Boxcarr Handmade Cheese is available in stores statewide; find a list at boxcarrhandmadecheese.com.

When it comes to sweets, chocolate and North Carolina pecans are a winning combination in Elizabeth's Chocolate Coated Pecans and Chocolate Covered Pecan Brittle. **Elizabeth's Pecan Products** is based in Turkey, Sampson County. The company was a Martha Stewart American Made Finalist last year and has North Carolina-shaped gift baskets available (elizabethspecans.com).

Leah Chester-Davis has her own business, Chester-Davis Communications (chester-davis.com), specializing in food, farm and lifestyle brands and organizations.

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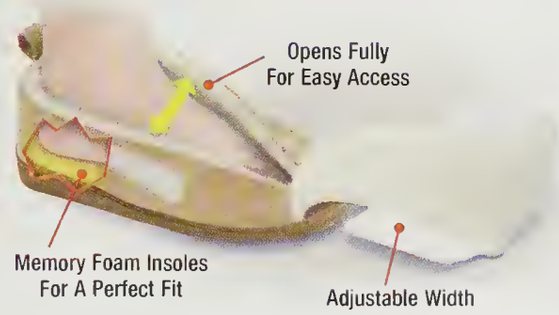

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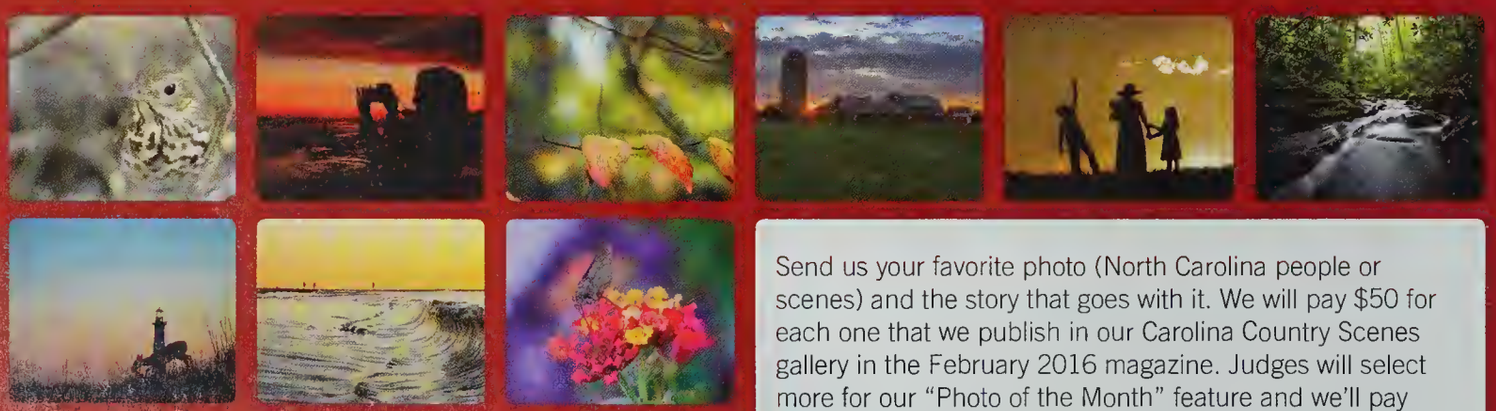
The test of time

In the 17 years I have lived off of South Lowell Road in northern Durham County, I have witnessed on numerous walks I make each week the deterioration and final collapse of several old tobacco barns. This one has stood the test of time, along with the two towering pines, in the middle of what was once a tobacco field, now a corn field. I pass this well-worn icon when I leave my home, walking, riding my bike or driving in my car. Every time I glance at it, I'm reminded of how it defines the history and the culture of our beautiful state.

Marshall McIver, Bahama, Piedmont EMC

The Photo of the Month comes from those that scored an honorable mention from the judges in our 2015 photo contest ("Carolina Country Scenes," February 2015). See even more at the Photo of the Week on our website **carolinacountry.com**.



CAROLINA COUNTRY SCENES photo contest

Send us your favorite photo (North Carolina people or scenes) and the story that goes with it. We will pay $50 for each one that we publish in our Carolina Country Scenes gallery in the February 2016 magazine. Judges will select more for our "Photo of the Month" feature and we'll pay $50 for those.

RULES:

Deadline: December 10, 2015.

One entry per household.

Digital photos should be a minimum of 1200 by 1800 pixels. Prints a minimum of 4 x 6 inches.

Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and e-mail address or phone number.

If you want your print returned, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)

We retain reprint rights.

We will post on our websites more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)

SEND TO:

Online: carolinacountry.com

Mail: Carolina Country Photo Contest
3400 Sumner Blvd.
Raleigh, NC 27616

Fa-la-lah-choo!

Allergic to the holidays? Here's how to keep yourself sneeze-free

Your goal may be to celebrate the holidays in style this year, but your allergies and asthma are making you feel like the Grinch. You may not even be aware of what's causing the extra sniffling, sneezing and itchy eyes.

"Two thirds of allergy sufferers have symptoms year-round, so it's not just a matter of the first freeze hitting and your symptoms disappearing," says Dr. Bryan Martin, president of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI). "Even after the pollen season dies down, there are environmental triggers to deal with—things like mold, dust and pet dander. The winter holidays can bring a whole new set of triggers."

Here are some ACAAI tips on ways to steer clear of allergic triggers that surface during the holidays.

Oh, the weather outside is frightful

Half the fun of the winter holidays is being outside—caroling, building snowmen, sledding. But if you have asthma, that very cold, dry air can be a trigger. If you're heading outside and it's very cold, cover your mouth and nose with a scarf or face mask—particularly if you'll be exercising.

Over the river

If you're traveling for the holidays and have allergies or asthma, pack your medicines. Some hotels now offer allergy-free rooms, so inquire when booking your stay. If you're allergic to dust mites, bring your allergy-blocking bedding. If you need injectable epinephrine, make sure you have two for your trip.

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree

Lots of traditions swirl around the holidays—and lots of dust, too. If you store ornaments and artificial trees in the attic without being covered, they may be full of dust, which can cause allergies to flare. Clean them thoroughly before putting them up, and when the holidays are over, store them in airtight boxes so that next year you'll deal with fewer triggers.

If you buy a real tree, know that some people have contact skin allergies to terpene, found in the sap of trees, as well as inhalant allergies to mold spores and pollen brought into the house by fresh trees and greenery.

Bring us a figgy pudding (or not)

The holidays often involve events where other people prepare the food. If you or your kids suffer from food allergies, you're probably skilled at bringing something you know everyone in your clan can eat. Give the host a heads up if there are certain ingredients she or he needs to steer clear of. Check labels of anything that's pre-prepared that you haven't eaten before. And know that lots of websites have allergy-safe recipes for holiday classics.

If you believe you suffer from allergies or asthma, see a board-certified allergist. Allergists are trained to diagnose and treat your symptoms, and to work with you to create an individual action plan.

—Brandpoint

Local resources

Did you know that roughly one out of every 10 children in North Carolina has asthma? Or that low-income households in North Carolina typically show higher rates of asthma compared to higher-income households?

For fact sheets, handouts and a list of medical resources to help fight asthma, you can call the N.C. Asthma Program at 919-707-5213 or visit asthma.ncdhhs.gov. Also, the North Carolina Healthy Homes website, nchealthyhomes.com, provides information on keeping homes healthier for occupants.

Keeping your data PRIVATE

Ways to protect your personal information online and offline

By Allison Goldberg

Keeping your personal information secure online might seem like a difficult task, thanks in part to nearly constant news of breaches and hacks. Fortunately, you can increase your online security and decrease chances that a malicious hacker will steal your private data.

Be skeptical

Bring the same skepticism you'd bring in the brick-and-mortar world to your experiences online.

- You wouldn't provide your credit card number, Social Security number and mother's maiden name to a stranger on the street. Don't do it online. Only provide it to trusted sources on secure sites. Look for "https" or a padlock symbol in the address bar.
- If you receive an e-mail purporting to be from a known entity, like your bank or credit card, asking you to click through to log into your account, instead go directly to the site by typing the URL into the address bar. You can also call the number on your card or on the official website to inquire about the e-mail.
- Use a credit card with consumer protections to shop online instead of your debit card, which would give a thief direct access to your checking or savings account. Try to use only one card for all your online purchases to further reduce risk exposure.

Don't overshare

Social media can be a fun way to share our lives, yet some things people happily post publicly on social media can compromise safety online and offline.

- If you want to share your birthday online, consider not sharing the year.
- Your mother's maiden name and your favorite sports teams can be used to answer security challenge questions to access various accounts. It may not be overly difficult for someone to get this info. So consider picking non-factual responses to use consistently in response to questions. For example, for "Favorite pet?" an answer could be "Abraham Lincoln."
- Consider not using your full legal name on public social media accounts.

Arm yourself

It will be more difficult to keep your information secure online if your computer, tablet, smartphone, browser and home network are vulnerable.

- Secure your wireless network—and all your devices—with strong passcodes that use a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols. Some security experts suggest creating a sentence with personal meaning from which you can create an acronym. Change your passwords at least once every six months.

Try to use only one card for all your online purchases to further reduce risk exposure.

- Only use public wireless networks that are secure. If you must use an unsecured network, do not conduct financial transactions.
- Make sure your operating system and browsers run with the latest updates and security patches. Use security software on your computers and run regular scans.
- To keep digital documents safe, encrypt your computer, your tablet and even your phone. Or keep sensitive documents, like medical records and tax returns, on an external hard drive that isn't connected to the Internet.
- Keep information safe offline, too. Securely shred any bills, financial statements, prescription labels, health information, receipts and similar documents.
- Consider opting out of pre-approved credit offers that could allow someone to apply for credit in your name. Go to optoutprescreen.com and follow instructions or call 888-567-8688 (888-5-OPTOUT).

Allison Goldberg writes and edits materials for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

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Winter's indoor air challenge

Efficient methods to improve air quality in your home

By James Dulley

Winter months can be challenging when it comes to indoor air quality. People often think their heat pump's filter will take care of indoor air quality. It does help remove particles from the air, but only the ones that stay suspended.

Central heating systems with efficient variable-speed blowers, which run slower and longer, will improve air quality.

Particles in the air are only one aspect of good air quality. The humidity level and other odorous and unhealthy chemicals also play a role. Just open the cabinet under your sink where you store cleaners, and you will realize the "soup" of stuff you breathe.

If you have a heat pump, and even though not all particles make it to the heat pump filter, try installing a high-quality pleated media filter. It will cost more than the 99 cent fiberglass one, but it is much more effective. This is particularly true for the smallest of particles. Make sure you change it regularly.

During winter, the best way to reduce indoor chemical pollutants in the air is to use less of them. Try using natural cleaners that are vinegar- and citrus-based, and reduce the use of aerosols.

Room-size electronic air cleaners are effective for removing those tiny particles that pop up when you plop down in a chair. They don't use much electricity and are quiet, so using one in a bedroom at night can help improve air quality.

Although it sounds counterintuitive, vacuum cleaning often creates small particle concentrations. If it smells like you just vacuumed when you are done, it's likely the fine particles are leaking out of the vacuum cleaner. Think about installing a central vacuum, which vents outdoors, or use a new portable vacuum with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) exhaust filter.

The room air flows through a wet wick inside this evaporative humidifier to add moisture to the air.

Keep the indoor air properly humidified so you can set your heat pump thermostat lower by a few degrees and still be comfortable. A heat pump-mounted central humidifier works well during cold weather, but may not run long enough to adequately humidify during milder weather. Using several room humidifiers is effective, and ultrasonic and evaporative types are energy efficient. Typically, 30 to 50 percent relative humidity provides comfort and healthy indoor air.

During winter, the best way to reduce indoor chemical pollutants in the air is to use less of them. Try using natural cleaners that are vinegar- and citrus-based, and reduce the use of aerosols.

Bringing fresh air into the house is necessary. Opening several windows on a windy day can exhaust much stale, chemical-laden air and it only takes a couple of minutes to freshen the air.

Another option: have your HVAC contractor install a damper in the return duct. The damper is ducted through a filter and leads to outdoors. When running the bathroom fan or range hood, the negative pressure created will draw fresh air indoors. When there is no negative pressure, the damper stays closed.

The most efficient method to bring in filtered fresh air is a heat recovery ventilation system. The outgoing stale air transfers most of its heat (up to 80 percent) to the incoming cold fresh air, and vice versa during summer. Most models have their own duct system. Window models, similar to a window air conditioner, are effective for a single room.

Jim Dulley is an engineer and a columnist for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Send inquiries to James Dulley, Carolina Country, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, Ohio, 45244, or visit dulley.com.

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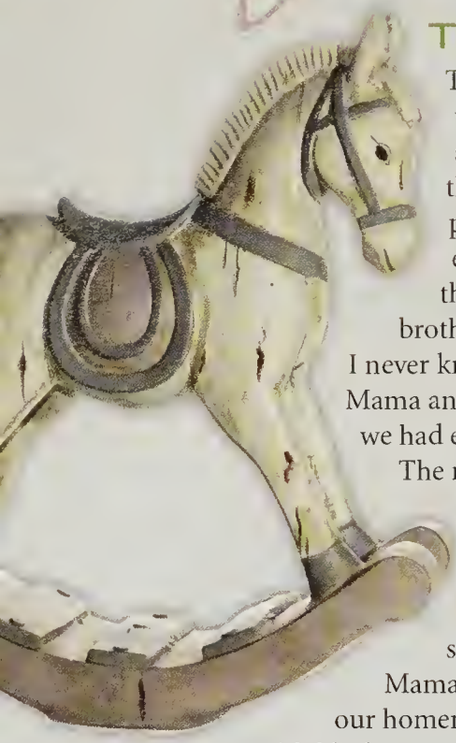

The rocking horse

The rocking horse was not new when it came into my possession. But in those days few things were. We were, I suppose, poor. Almost everyone in rural eastern North Carolina during those war years was poor. My brother Henry, my sister Jeanie and I never knew it, of course, thanks to a Mama and Daddy who made us feel like we had everything we could need.

The rocking horse had belonged to Jeanie before it became mine on Christmas 1943. I suspect it wasn't new when she got it either, because it was strangely the same color that Mama had painted the chairs around our homemade dining table. She was red with black eyes and black steel rockers.

I spent many happy hours rocking her on the front porch, picturing myself riding through the woods down hidden paths. It is little wonder, then, that one of the most difficult things I would ever face was parting with her. It happened Christmas Eve 1948.

Mama would always tell me it is better to give than to receive, but to a 10-year-old boy who didn't have much, that was not an easy lesson to learn.

On Christmas Eve, our church would go around singing carols and collecting items for a family that had even less than we did. This Christmas Eve I was in bed with a headache. Mama came in and asked me if there was anything I wanted to give to the family. "I don't have anything," I said.

Mama already had turned to go when I heard myself saying, "I want to give my rocking horse, Mama."

At that moment I became aware of the true meaning of Christmas: God giving us his most precious possession, his only son.

Perry Turner, Ernul, Tideland EMC

Christmas Day makeover

During the Great Depression, my family had little money to spend on Christmas. Other families began putting up the tree, trimming the house, setting decorations in the front yard and on the roof well in advance of Christmas Day. Not our family. When we children went to bed on Christmas Eve, our home looked the way it always did. No tree, not a decoration, not even a scrap of tinsel did we see as we climbed the stairs to our bedrooms.

But the next morning, our living room had been turned into a welcoming wonderland! There shone a glittering tree—not many ornaments, but each limb had been covered in absorbent cotton and each line of tinsel had been hung individually to make the tree seem overflowing with shining delights.

Under the tree were our presents. Each of my old dolls was waiting for me in a brand new dress. During the year, my mother had taken dress scraps and made new dresses, washed faces and curled doll hair.

One Christmas I received my Flossie Flirt doll. She had eyeglasses and flirted by moving her eyes from left to right. At 94, I still have this favorite doll.

My mother and father stayed up most of Christmas Eve to fill the room with Christmas spirit. I carried on the tradition with my children until they got old enough to help. But I couldn't convince them to hang tinsel by placing each gleaming line on the tree.

Fran Farlow, Gastonia, Rutherford EMC

I still have my Flossie Flirt doll with her eyeglasses.

SEND US YOUR *Memories*

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WHERE IN CAROLINA COUNTRY IS THIS?

This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by Dec. 4 with your name, address and the name of your electric cooperative.

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Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

Multiple entries from the same person will be disqualified.

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our January issue, will receive $25. To see the answer before you get your January magazine, go to "Where Is This?" on our website carolinacountry.com.

November winner

It took a sharp eye to recognize the scene in November's magazine. About 20 people submitted the correct answer. The photo by Bob Belcher of Hope Mills shows the Washington, N.C., waterfront as seen looking east from the Hwy. 17 bridge at sunrise. This is where the Tar and Pamlico rivers meet. The winning entry chosen at random from all correct submissions came from Gail B. Travis of Greenville, a member of Tideland EMC.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Loose Saggy Neck Skin – Can Any Cream Cure Turkey Neck?

DEAR DORRIS: I'm a woman who is 64 years young who suffers from really loose skin under my chin and on my lower neck.

I hate the term, but my grandkids say I have "turkey neck" and frankly, I've had enough of it! I have tried some creams designed to help tighten and firm that loose, saggy skin, but they did not work. Is there any cream out there that Might help my loose neck skin?

Turkey Neck, Durham, NC

DEAR TURKEY-NECK: In fact, there is a very potent cream on the market that is designed to firm, tighten and invigorate skin cells on the neck area. It is called the **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream.**

This cream contains an instant-effect ingredient that aims to tighten the skin naturally, as well as deep-moisturizing ingredients aiming to firm the skin and make it more supple. Amazingly, the Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream also has Stem Cells taken from Malus Domesticus, a special apple from Switzerland.

These apple stem cells target your skin's aging cells, and strive to bring back their youthful firmness, and elasticity. As an alternative to the scary surgeries or face lifts that many people resort to, this cream has the potential to deliver a big punch to the loose saggy skin of the neck. **The Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream is available online at Dermagist.com** or you can order or learn more by **calling toll-free, 888-771-5355.** Oh, I almost forgot... I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me 10% off. The code was **"NCN17"**. It's worth a try to see if it still works.

You can reach Charles Joyner by e-mail: joyner@carolinacountry.com

SQUARED

Can you arrange the digits 4567 to make a perfect square?

NORTH CAROLINA

The community

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _,
m b s r c l e a m b l d
located three miles west of Bakersville, earned its name because local womenfolk thought their husbands lazed around the general store too much. That's the story, anyway.

Use the capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.

A E F G L O R S Y means
s c r a m b l e d

After ME

Can you fill in the blanks below to spell a word?

M E _ _ A N

M E _ _ _ O N

M E _ _ A T E

M E _ _ O R

M E _ L O W

M E _ _ _ T O

UNSCRAMBLIT

"If all economists were laid end to end they would _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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December Events

Discover the beauty of LED-lighted garden exhibits at the second annual Winter Lights show. It's up now through Jan. 2, 2016, at the North Carolina Arboretum, just south of Asheville. New this year: a 50-foot tree with a light show every 30 minutes, new displays synchronized to music and nightly entertainment. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Buy them at 800-514-3849 or at ***ncwinterlights.com****.*

Mountains (west of I-77)

Lights & Luminaries
Dec. 4–5 & 11–12, Dillsboro
800-962-1911
visitdillsboro.org

Santa Claus Comes To Town
Photos, treat bags for kids
Dec. 4, Burnsville
828-682-7413
yanceychamber.com

Christmas Parade
Dec. 5, Burnsville
828-682-7413
yanceychamber.com

Toe River Holiday Studio Tour
Dec. 4–6, Burnsville
828-682-7215
toeriverarts.org

Christmas Candlelight Tour
Hot cider at Vance birthplace
Dec. 5, Weaverville
828-645-6706
nchistoricsites.org/vance/

Candle Tea & Christmas Bazaar
Dec. 5, Newton
828-294-4802
newhopemoravian.org

Walk To The Stable
Nativity re-creation
Dec. 5–6, Statesville
704-924-8343

Toe River Holiday Studio Tour
Dec. 4–6, Burnsville

Winter On The Western Front
Dec. 12, Statesville
704-873-5882
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Christmas In The Park
Santa train ride, cookie baking
Dec. 12, Banner Elk
828-898-8395
bannerelk.com

ONGOING

Mountain Gateway Music Jam
Sundays through Dec. 20, Old Fort
828-290-2377
mountaingatewaymuseum.org

Woody's Original Mountain Music
Every Friday (except Christmas), Marion
828-290-2377
Find them on facebook.com

Piedmont (between I-77 & I-95)

Jingle On Main
Dec. 3, Roxboro
336-322-2104
exploreroxboro.com

Holiday Café & Bake Sale
Dec. 3–4, Raleigh
919-781-4548
holytrinityraleigh.org

Shana Tucker ChamberSoul
Singer-songwriter-cellist
Dec. 4, Roxboro
336-597-1709
personcounty.net

A Baroque Christmas
N.C. Symphony
Dec. 4, Raleigh
919-733-2750
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Yuletide Feaste
Carolers, Renaissance-style dinner
Dec. 4–5, Fayetteville
910-630-7100
methodist.edu

Christmas Parade
Dec. 5, Hope Mills
910-426-4107
townofhopemills.com

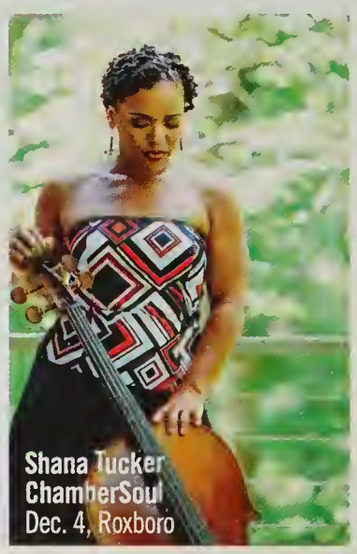
Deck The Hall
Parade, tree lighting, elves
Dec. 5, Pilot Mountain
336-496-2664
visitpilotmountain.com

Breakfast With Santa
Dec. 5, Hope Mills
910-426-4107
townofhopemills.com

Tribute To Charlie Brown Christmas
Pianist David Benoit
Dec. 5, Pembroke
910-521-6361
uncp.edu/giving

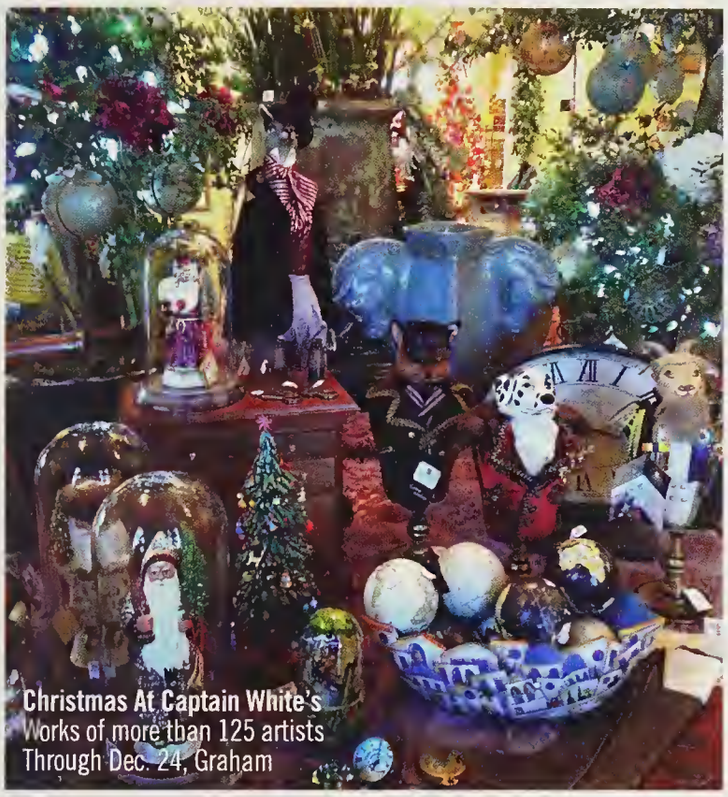
A Golden Christmas
Reed Gold Mine
Dec. 5, Midland
704-721-4653
nchistoricsites.org

Christmas At Home Art Show & Sale
Dec. 5, Franklinton
919-497-6910
fcacarts.org



Shana Tucker ChamberSoul
Dec. 4, Roxboro

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO
In case something changes after Carolina Country goes to press, check information from the contact listed.


Christmas At Captain White's
Works of more than 125 artists
Through Dec. 24, Graham

Welcome To December
Christmas concert
Dec. 5, Lexington
336-956-8814
lexingtonchoralsociety.org

Festival Of Lights
Dec. 5, Hope Mills
910-424-4555
townofhopemills.com

WWE Live Holiday Tour
Dec. 5, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com

Daryl Hall & John Oates
Duo in concert
Dec. 5, Fayetteville
910-303-3515
crowncomplexnc.com

Christmas Parade
December 6, Kernersville
336-993-4521
kernersvillenc.com

Holiday Jubilee
Dec. 6, Fayetteville
910-486-1330
museumofthecapefear.ncdcr.gov

A Baroque Christmas
N.C. Symphony
Dec. 6, Southern Pines
877-627-6724
ncdcr.gov/holidays

The Nutcracker
N.C. State Ballet
Dec. 6, 12–13, Fayetteville
910-323-5088
ncstateballet.com

A Baroque Christmas
N.C. Symphony
Dec. 9, Chapel Hill
919-733-2750
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Concert For The Christmas Season
The Community Choir
Dec. 10 & 12, Roxboro
336-599-9248

Behold: A Musical Christmas Story
Dec. 10–11, Fayetteville
910-420-4383
sweetteashakespeare.com

Miracle On 34th Street
Free movie series
Dec. 11, Roxboro
336-597-1709
personcounty.net

Christmas In The Carolinas
During the Civil War
Dec. 12, Durham
919-383-4345
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Christmas Parade
Dec. 12, Roxboro
336-599-5503

Cookies & Cocoa With Claus
Dec. 12, Roxboro
336-599-1564
roxboropresbyterian.org

Music Royalty
Nathan Stanley & Bobby Osborne
Dec. 12, Liberty
336-570-2043
thelibertyshowcase.com

The Hallelujah Chorus—Messiah Sing!
Dec. 12, Fayetteville
910-630-7153
singwithcos.org

Breakfast With Santa
Dec. 12, Fayetteville
910-643-2778
asomf.org

Holiday Pops
Dec. 12, Fayetteville
910-433-4690
fayettevillesymphonyorchestra.org

Christmas Open House
House in the Horseshoe
Dec. 12, Sanford
910-947-2051
ncdcr.gov/holidays

The Journey & Outdoor Drama
From Nazareth through Bethlehem
Dec. 12, Denton
336-250-6352

Polar Bear Plunge
Hay-wagon rides, holiday games
Dec. 12, Fort Bragg
910-396-5979
bragg.armymwr.com

Christmas With Chad Gaines & The Blenders
Dec. 13, Liberty
336-570-2043
thelibertyshowcase.com

Disney On Ice: 100 Years of Magic
Dec. 16–20, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com

Betty Lynn (Thelma Lou)
Andy Griffith Museum
Dec. 18, Mount Airy
336-786-7998
andygriffithmuseum.com

Cirque Musica Holiday Spectacular
N.C. Symphony
Dec. 18–19, Raleigh
919-733-2750
ncdcr.gov/holidays

It's Finally Christmas!
Dec. 18–20, Clinton
910-990-4510
sampsoncommunitytheatre.org

Elvis Meets Patsy
Dec. 19, Liberty
336-570-2043
thelibertyshowcase.com

New Year's Eve In Vienna
N.C. Symphony
Dec. 31, Raleigh
919-733-2750
ncdcr.gov/holidays

ONGOING

It's A Wonderful Life
Play about a man, guardian angel
Nov. 27 - Dec. 20, Fayetteville
910-678-7186
gilberttheater.org

Christmas At Captain White's
Works of more than 125 artists
Through Dec. 24, Graham
336-226-4495
alamancearts.org

Enter The Dragon:
Chinese & Chinese-American Art Exhibit
Through May 31, Charlotte
704-568-1774
charlottemuseum.org

Treasures Of Carolina: Stories From The States Archives
Rare documents, maps, photos
Through June 19, 2016, Raleigh
919-807-7943
ncmuseumofhistory.org

The Heart Of Christmas
A Christmas Village/Live Nativity
Dec. 4–13, Oakboro
704-485-4814

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever
Dec. 4–20, Fayetteville
910-323-4234
cfrt.org

Holiday Lights In The Garden
Dec. 11–27, Fayetteville
910-486-0221
capefearbg.org

ONGOING

Country Christmas Train
Through Dec 27, Denton
(336) 859-2755
farmpark.com

Country Christmas Train
Through Dec 27, Denton

Christmas Candlelight Tour
Dec. 12, Beaufort

Coast (east of I-95)

Christmas Parade
Dec. 3, Ayden
252-746-2266
aydenchamber.com

Kris Kringle Craft Show
Dec. 4–5, Washington
252-946-6208
theblindcenter.org

Christmas Parade
Dec. 4, Greenville
252-329-4200
greenvillejaycees.com

Art Walk
First Friday, Elizabeth City
252-335-5330
ecncart.com

Art Walk
First Friday, Greenville
252-561-8400
uptowngreenville.com

Vintage Hitchcock: A Live Radio Play
Dec. 4–6, Oriental
252-249-0477
oldtheater.org

A Civil War Christmas
Dec. 5, Four Oaks

A Dickens Tale
Dec. 5, Manteo
252-475-1500
roanokeisland.com

Christmas With Santa
Dec. 5, Manteo
252-475-1500
roanokeisland.com

Christmas Flotilla
Dec. 5, Beaufort
252-728-7317
ncdcr.gov/holidays

A Civil War Christmas
Bentonville Battlefield
Dec. 5, Four Oaks
910-594-0789
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Christmas Open House
Dec. 6, Windsor
252-794-3140
hopeplantation.org

Meeting & Holiday Open House
Friends of the Maritime Museum
Dec. 6, Beaufort
252-728-7317
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Christmas Open House
Somerset Place Historic Site
Dec. 6, Creswell
252-797-4560
ncculture.com

Holiday Pops
N.C. Symphony
Dec. 10, Jacksonville
877-627-6724
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Holiday Pops
N.C. Symphony
Dec. 12, Wilmington
877-627-6724
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Christmas Candlelight Tour
Dec. 12, Beaufort
252-728-5225
beauforthistoricsite.org

Christmas Parade
Dec. 12, Winterville
252-215-2435
wintervillenc.com

Holly & Ivy Tour
Dec. 12, New Bern
252-349-4741
newbernwomansclub.com

Christmas In Halifax
Dec. 12, Halifax
252-583-7191
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Christmas Open House
Dec. 12, Bath
252-923-3971
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Holiday At The Museum
Dec. 12, Hatteras
252-986-2995
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Christmas Parade
Dec. 12, Farmville
252-714-5158
farmville-nc.com

Holiday Pops
N.C. Symphony
Dec. 15, New Bern
877-627-6724
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Christmas Candlelight Tour
Dec. 12, Beaufort
252-728-5225
beauforthistoricsite.org

An 18th Century Christmas
Dec. 13, Winnabow
910-371-6613
ncdcr.gov/holidays

Holiday Tour
Dec. 13, Snow Hill
252-747-3439
calvarymemorialumc.org

Candlelight
Historical scenes, magic tricks.
Dec. 12 & 19, New Bern
800-767-1560
tryonpalace.org/candlelight

Steve Hardy's Original Beach Party
Greenville Convention Center
Dec. 17, Greenville
252-321-7671

Shop Around The Corner
Friday Flicks series
Dec. 18, Oriental
252-249-0477
oldtheater.org

ONGOING

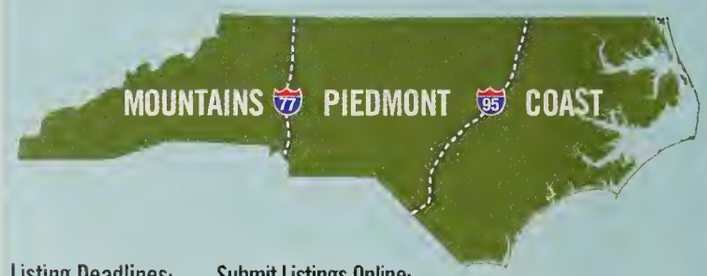
Festival Of Trees
Dec 1–22, Greenville
252-328-9332
fsnenc.org

Christmas At The Amuzu
Dec. 3–13, Southport
910-523-2552
amuzutheatre.com

Holiday Tours
New decorations, costumed characters
Nov. 27-Jan. 3, New Bern
252-639-3500
tryonpalace.org

NEW Carolina Compass Policy *(effective Oct. 1, 2015)*

- We list events in the magazine as space allows and may edit as needed. We list more events on CarolinaCountry.com in the Carolina Adventures section.
- All submissions must be made on CarolinaCountry.com in Carolina Adventures/Submit an Event. Deadlines are posted there, too. ***(No e-mail or U.S. Mail.)***
- Public venue events only. *(No business-hosted events.)*
- Limit 3 events per venue per month in the magazine. More posted online.
- For accuracy, ongoing events must be submitted monthly.
- Public contact required: website, e-mail or phone number.



Listing Deadlines:
For Feb.: Dec. 25
For March: Jan. 25

Submit Listings Online:
Visit carolinacountry.com and click "Carolina Adventures" to add your event to the magazine and/or our website.

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Limit 1 coupon per customer per day. Save 20% on any 1 item purchased. *Cannot be used with other discount, coupon or any of the following items or brands: Inside Track Club membership, extended service plan, gift card, open box item, 3 day parking lot sale item, compressors, floor jacks, saw mills, storage cabinets, chests or carts, trenchers, welders, Admiral, CoverPro, Daytona, Diablo, Franklin, Hercules, Holt, Jupiter, Predator, Stik-Tek, StormCat, Union, Vanguard, Viking. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16.

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1" x 25 FT. TAPE MEASURE

LOT 69080 shown 69030/69031

$6.99 VALUE

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25571072

WOW SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating ★★★★½

★ WINNER ★ – Truckin' Magazine

26", 4 DRAWER TOOL CART

US★GENERAL

LOT 95659 shown 61634/61952

SAVE $250

$99.99 ~~$159.99~~ comp at $349.99

• 580 lb. Capacity

25565518

LIMIT 3 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON

HFT

27 LED PORTABLE WORKLIGHT/FLASHLIGHT

LOT 67227 shown 69567/60566/62532

SAVE 58%

Customer Rating ★★★★½

Batteries included.

$2.99 comp at $7.15

25530553

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WOW SUPER COUPON

12" SLIDING COMPOUND DOUBLE-BEVEL MITER SAW WITH LASER GUIDE

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

NEW

SAVE $264

Customer Rating ★★★½

LOT 61776 61969/61970 69684 shown

$134.99 ~~$184.99~~ comp at $399

25532715

LIMIT 4 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON

CEN-TECH

AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER

SAVE 82%

LOT 42292 shown 69594/69955

Customer Rating ★★★★

$5.99 comp at $34.99

25555725

LIMIT 6 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON

12,000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE

BADLAND

LOT 61256/60813 61889/68142 shown

SAVE $453

Customer Rating ★★★★

$299.99 comp at $752.99

25571998

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SUPER COUPON

9 PIECE FULLY POLISHED COMBINATION WRENCH SETS

Customer Rating ★★★★½

PITTSBURGH

SAVE 66%

SAE LOT 69043/42304 shown

METRIC LOT 42305/69044

YOUR CHOICE

$5.99 comp at $17.97

25546837

LIMIT 9 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON

RAPID PUMP® 3 TON LOW PROFILE HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

SAVE $85

• Weighs 73 lbs.

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE

20"

LOT 61282 shown 68049/62326 62670/61253

Customer Rating ★★★★½

$84.99 comp at $169.99

25550454

LIMIT 4 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

WOW SUPER COUPON

4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER

drillmaster

LOT 60625 shown 69645/95578

SAVE 62%

Customer Rating ★★★½

$11.11 ~~$14.99~~ comp at $29.97

25530748

LIMIT 4 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON

CENTRALPNEUMATIC 3 GALLON, 100 PSI OILLESS PANCAKE AIR COMPRESSOR

LOT 60637/61615/95275 shown

Customer Rating ★★★½

SAVE 55%

$39.99 comp at $89

25540692

LIMIT 4 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON

ADJUSTABLE SHADE AUTO-DARKENING WELDING HELMET

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING

Customer Rating ★★★★½

LOT 61611 46092 shown

SAVE 50%

$39.99 comp at $79.99

25557988

LIMIT 3 - Good at our stores or HarborFreight.com or by calling 800-423-2567. Cannot be used with other discount or coupon or prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 3/25/16. Limit one coupon per customer per day.

WOW SUPER COUPON

PREDATOR GENERATORS

8750 PEAK/7000 RUNNING WATTS 13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATORS

Customer Rating ★★★★

SUPER QUIET

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By Hannah McKenzie

When duct cleaning makes sense

Q: My neighbor told me about a local company that cleans the inside of the heating and air conditioning ducts. She said it makes the air in the house healthier and also saves energy. Is this worth the investment or just a scam?

A: Sealing your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system's ducts, as mentioned in last month's article, often produces noticeable energy savings and may improve indoor air quality. Cleaning your ducts is more of a gamble. Current research doesn't provide reassurance that duct cleaning will always be a win-win solution because results from cleaning vary a lot. Sometimes the level of contaminants in the indoor air after duct cleaning is higher than before cleaning. In circumstances where ducts have extreme filth, duct cleaning is more likely to be beneficial.

As with all things in life, prevention is the key to avoiding problems.

- Like changing the oil in your car, routine HVAC maintenance is very important. Simple steps like changing HVAC filters, cleaning coils and other components is good for the long-term health of your HVAC system, indoor air quality and pocket book.
- Consider routine inspection of ductwork for cleanliness, especially if some family members are inclined to use air vents as trash receptacles. Sometimes new homes have this problem from construction workers. A vacuum cleaner can normally solve the problem.
- Thorough housekeeping can help reduce irritants and pests—such as pollen, pet dander, dust mites or mice and their waste—and prevent them from taking up residence in your HVAC ductwork.
- Keep contaminants such as a kitty litter box or trash can away from the air return.

A flexible HVAC duct that needs cleaning. *A clean flexible HVAC duct.*

- During home improvements, turn off the HVAC system and cover air supply and return vents to prevent construction dust and debris from entering the system.
- If you haven't yet had your ducts sealed, consider doing it yourself or hire a duct sealing contractor. ["On the House," November 2015]

Despite our best efforts to keep ducts clean, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) suggests that duct cleaning or duct replacement may be appropriate with the following situations:

- Permanent or persistent water damage in ducts.
- Slime or microbial growth observed in ducts.
- Debris build-up that restricts airflow in ducts.
- Dust being spewed from supply vents.
- Offensive odors originating in ductwork or HVAC components.

Ducts are commonly made of three materials: rigid metal, one to two inches thick fiberglass duct board, or plastic flex duct. Sometimes systems are a combination of the three. In the case of flex duct, it is often more effective to replace it rather than risk damaging it by attempted cleaning. Dirty, wet or moldy fiberglass duct board or fiberglass lined ducts should also be replaced, because trying to clean it can make conditions worse.

When your ducts are made of a cleanable material like rigid metal, select a duct cleaning contractor that is a member in good standing with the National Air Duct Cleaning Association (NADCA). Get quotes from three different companies and check multiple references from each company. Contact NADCA to find contractors in your area. 855-GO-NADCA or nadca.com

Protect your family during the duct cleaning process by ensuring that duct vents are covered so contaminants aren't blown into your home. The use of biocides and chemicals is not recommended because even EPA-registered products may pose health risks, including eye, nose and skin irritation. Ideally, have the duct cleaning done while your family is out of the house.

Hannah McKenzie is a residential building science consultant for Advanced Energy in Raleigh.

For more information about duct cleaning, contact the National Institutes of Health at (301) 496-3457 or find its Division of Occupational Health and Safety Fact Sheet on HVAC Duct Cleaning by searching "duct cleaning" at www.ors.od.nih.gov

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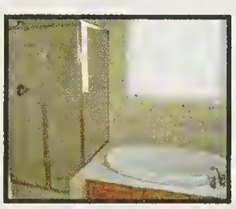

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By L.A. Jackson

The dogwoods of winter

Blood-twig dogwood 'Midwinter Fire'

When in full bloom, white-flowering dogwoods (Cornus florida) are the bright beacons of yet another new spring, but as winter grips the garden, their leafless forms are dull visually and turn few heads. However, there are other dogwoods that, believe it or not, are at their beautiful best during the coldest times of the year. Dogwoods that blossom in winter? Nope. Instead, there are interesting selections from the Cornus Clan that light up dreary winter landscapes with sassy shows of brightly colored branches.

One of the more common of these uncommon winter woody ornamentals is the red-twig or red osier dogwood (Cornus sericea). It is a native plant, actually, that is a shrub topping out at 6 to 8 feet, rather than a small tree like the typical dogwood. Also, while Cornus florida sports large flowers, the red-twig has clusters of modest, star-like blooms in the spring.

However, it is in the winter when this eye-catching oddity that is the red-twig dogwood literally shines. Its limbs, which are a muted burgundy during the warmer months, begin to take on a brighter glow accentuated by the low winter sun. And without leaves to hide the razzle-dazzle, this cold weather show is hard to miss and easy to appreciate. Many cultivars with even brighter branches than the native form have even been developed and include the selections 'Isanti', 'Baileyi', 'Cardinal' and 'Arctic Fire'.

And just to make things confusing, there are yellow-twig cultivars of the red-twig dogwood. 'Flaviramea' has been a standard for years, but the newer 'Bud's Yellow' boasts better disease resistance. Also, the double delight of 'Silver and Gold' glows with sizzling yellow limbs in the winter and snazzy variegated foliage in the summer.

Prefer variegated foliage with crimson-colored limbs? Try 'Elegantissima', a cultivar of the Tatarian dogwood (Cornus alba), which is native to China.

Finally, one more showoff to consider is the blood-twig dogwood (Cornus sanguinea), a European import that zaps muted winter landscapes with mingled streaks of red, orange and yellow. 'Winter Flame' and 'Midwinter Fire' are two worthy cultivars to consider.

All of these twiggy winter beauties will have brighter glows if planted in full sun. Also, since mature branches tend to dull over time, it is best to prune out older limbs in the early spring about every two to three years.

Garden to do's

December

- ☐ Free plants! Try your hand at propagating hardwood cuttings of such plants as forsythia, holly, juniper, mock orange, spirea, viburnum and Japanese quince.
- ☐ Next year's vegetable garden begins now! This month is a good time to try your hand at planting and growing asparagus. Two rust-resistant varieties are 'Mary Washington' and 'Jersey Giant'.
- ☐ If you need to use wire to keep new tree plantings straight, slip a short piece of old hose onto the line and place it where it comes into contact with the tree. This prevents the wire from cutting into the bark.
- ☐ With less light and cooler temperatures, indoor plants grow slower, so cut back on fertilizer and water.

January

- ☐ Had your garden soil tested yet? The more you know about your garden's ground now, the better you will be able to tend to your plants' needs during the growing seasons.
- ☐ It is not too early to begin buying annual seeds from garden catalogs and online sites because new and in-demand varieties can sell out quickly.
- ☐ Early in the New Year, winter-flowering camellias (Camellia japonica) will begin displaying their beautiful blooms. Enjoy their show, but also be vigilant to rake up and dispose of any spent blossoms that drop to the ground. These fallen flowers are prime breeding material for petal blight, a fungal disease that can discolor future blooms with ugly splotches of brown.

L.A. Jackson is the former editor of Carolina Gardener Magazine. lajackson1@gmail.com

Tip of the Month

Christmas peppers can display their festive fruits through the Yuletide season and well into the New Year if certain basic needs are met. First, the pot should be free-draining, so remove any foil or plastic wrap. Water once a week, adding a diluted fertilizer solution every other feeding and occasionally misting the leaves. Also, place the pepper plant in the sunniest indoor spot possible (four hours of direct sun or more is ideal) but at least 6 inches away from cold windows. As a side note, resist the temptation to eat the fruit — most ornamental peppers are poor, pithy, seedy cousins of typical tasty hot peppers from the summer garden.

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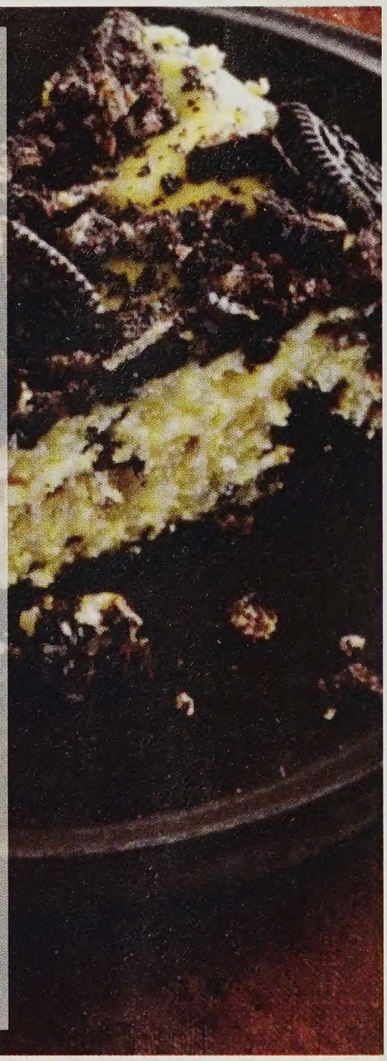
Chocolate Cookie Cheesecake



- 1½ cups crushed cream-filled chocolate sandwich cookies (about 20 cookies)
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 3 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup (8 ounces) sour cream
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 15 coarsely chopped cream filled chocolate sandwich cookies (about 2¼ cups), divided

In a large bowl, combine crushed cookies and butter. Press onto bottom and 1-inch up the sides of a greased 9-inch springform pan; set aside.

In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar until smooth. Beat in the sour cream, flour, vanilla and salt. Add eggs; beat on low speed just until combined. Fold in ¾ cup chopped cookies. Pour into crust. Top with the remaining cookies.

Place on a baking sheet. Bake at 325 degrees for 60-65 minutes or until center is almost set. Cool on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Carefully run a knife around the edge of pan to loosen; cool 1 hour longer. Refrigerate overnight. Remove sides of pan.

Yield: 12 servings

Citrus-Molasses Glazed Ham

- 1 fully cooked bone-in ham (7 to 9 pounds)

Glaze

- ½ cup grapefruit juice
- ½ cup orange juice
- ¼ cup molasses
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 3 teaspoons coarsely ground pepper

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Place ham on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Using a sharp knife, score surface of ham with ¼-inch deep cuts in a diamond pattern. Cover and bake 1¾ to 2¼ hours or until a thermometer reads 130 degrees.

Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, combine grapefruit and orange juices. Bring to a boil; cook 6–8 minutes or until liquid is reduced by half. Stir in remaining ingredients; return to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 12–15 minutes or until glaze is thickened.

Remove ham from oven. Brush on ⅓ cup glaze. Bake ham, uncovered, 15–20 minutes longer or until thermometer reads 140 degrees, basting occasionally with remaining glaze.

Yield: 12 servings

Bonus Recipe!
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Overnight Layered Lettuce Salad

- 1 medium head iceberg lettuce, torn
- 1 medium green pepper, chopped
- 1 small sweet red pepper, chopped
- 1 medium onion, sliced and separated into rings
- 2 cups frozen peas (about 10 ounces)
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
- 12 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
- ¾ cup dried cranberries

In a 3-quart or 13-by-9-inch glass dish, layer first five ingredients. In a small bowl, mix mayonnaise and sugar; spoon over salad, spreading to cover.

Sprinkle top with cheese, bacon and cranberries. Refrigerate, covered, overnight.

Yield: 16 servings

From Your Kitchen

Buffalo Chicken Dip

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup ranch dressing
- ¼ cup blue cheese dressing
- ½ cup hot pepper sauce
- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 cups canned chicken

Mix all ingredients. Bake at 400 degrees for 25 minutes. Serve with tortilla chips.

This recipe comes from Jill Listrom of Rolesville, a member of Wake EMC.

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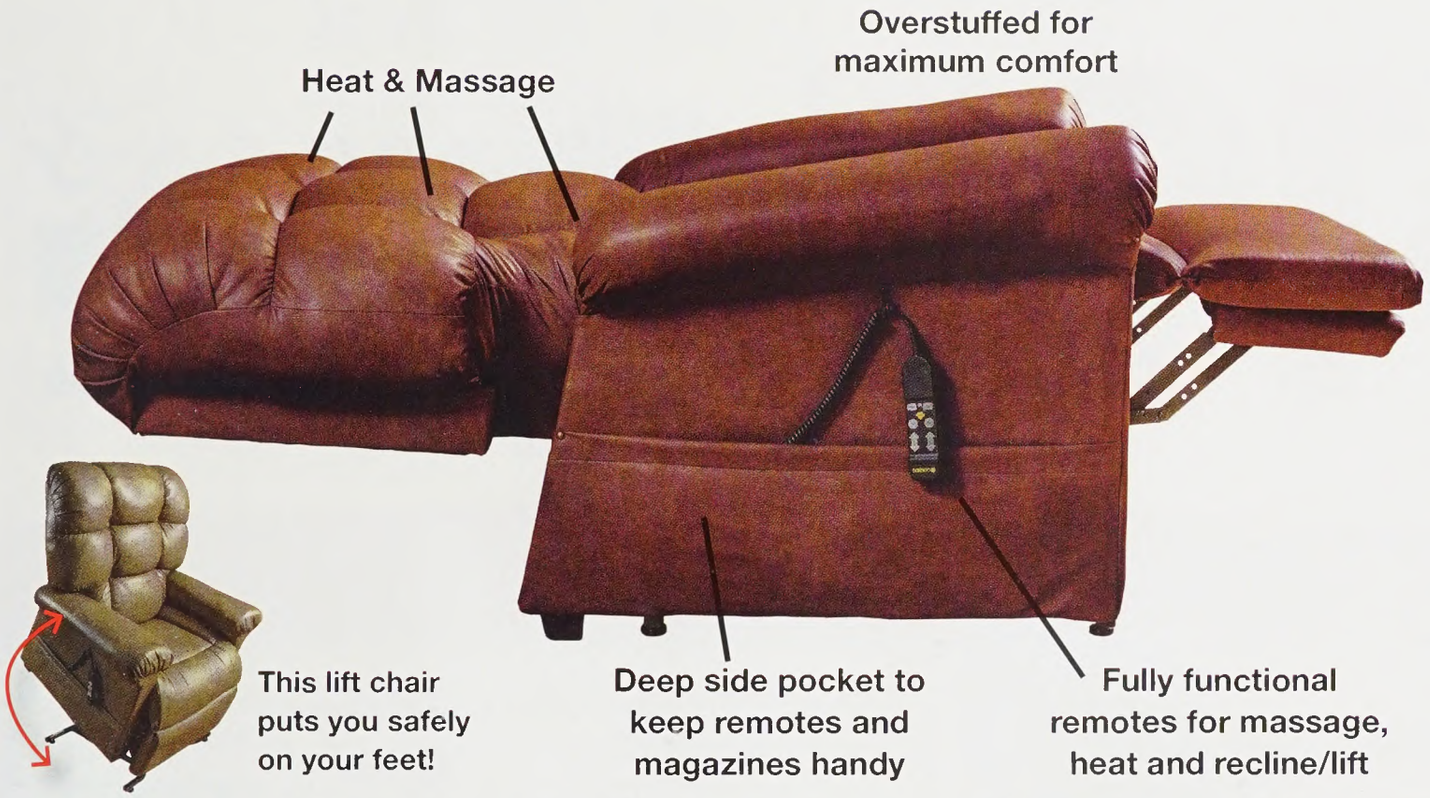
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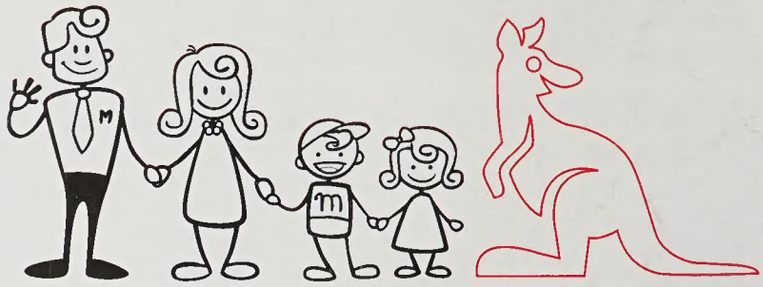

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